



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Closing the gap clearinghouse

Engagement with Indigenous communities in key sectors

Resource sheet no. 23 produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

Janet Hunt

October 2013

Summary

What we know

- Without genuine engagement of Indigenous people it will be difficult to meet the Council of Australian Government targets for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls on states to obtain free prior and informed consent of Indigenous people through their representative institutions before adopting legislative or administrative measures that would affect them; it provides an internationally developed framework for engagement.
- Community engagement requires a relationship built on trust and integrity: it is a sustained relationship between groups of people working towards shared goals.
- Literature on engaging Indigenous communities in Australia tends to focus at the regional level (see Hunt 2013, Appendix 1) and in certain key sectors, notably early childhood, environment and natural resource management, and health.
- While there may be very specific requirements for engaging with Indigenous individuals across specific sectors, there are some common lessons about engagement with Indigenous communities across the sectors identified above.

What works

- Engagement occurring through partnerships with Indigenous organisations within a framework of self-determination and Indigenous control.
- Strategies explicitly addressing power inequalities, with genuine efforts to share power, including through negotiated agreements.



- Staff working with Indigenous people who understand the social and cultural context in each place and contemporary social fluidity.
- Sharing responsibility for shared, realistic objectives and collaborative formulation of criteria and indicators for annual self-assessments, including assessment of the processes as well as the outcomes.
- Adequate and sustained resourcing based on the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
- All parties committing to develop long term relationships based on trust, and to work within appropriate timeframes.
- Where land and environmental issues are concerned, planning at the scale of each group's 'country'.

What doesn't work

- Staff operating on assumptions about the Indigenous community, its membership, its governance, and who can represent its views which are not accurate; failing to recognise the diversity within any Indigenous community.
- Staff treating Indigenous people as 'one stakeholder among many' rather than as recognised traditional owners of country, especially in environmental work.
- Governments failing to address the power inequalities, expecting Indigenous people to function in western bureaucratic forms and style, and favouring western over Indigenous knowledge.
- Racism embedded in institutions.

What we don't know

- How 'mainstream' organisations could effectively engage Indigenous people without working with and through Indigenous partners.
- There is not a lot of information about effective community engagement in sectors other than those indicated below.
- How well domestic social welfare organisations or many private sector bodies engage Indigenous communities.

Introduction

This resource sheet examines the evidence of what is working (or not) in approaches to engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in some key sectors that are best represented in the literature on engagement.

The paper reviews evidence from studies of Indigenous engagement in three sectors:

- early childhood services
- environmental and natural resource management (NRM) activities
- health programs.

These studies cover different levels of engagement from local engagement through to regional, state-wide and national engagement. The lessons from these sectors are consistent with those on regional engagement. The resource sheet also considers the research on international non-government organisations (NGOs) and their engagement with Indigenous communities and organisations in the areas of health, early childhood and financial literacy.



This resource sheet is intended to complement the Clearinghouse issues paper *Engaging with Indigenous Australia—exploring the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*, which outlines evidence of Indigenous engagement more generally in Australia and overseas.

Partnership engagement in early childhood services

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care undertook significant case study research into what makes for successful engagement with Aboriginal child care services to enable it to provide the most culturally appropriate and effective child care (Burton 2012). This study draws on significant experience among nine case study partnerships with government and non-government agencies in three jurisdictions. One study was confidential; the other eight are:

- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative and UnitingCare Gippsland
- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative and Gippsland Lakes Community Health
- Wyndham Early Learning Activity Centre and Save the Children Australia
- Dalaigur Pre-School and Children's Services
- Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat (NSW) and the New South Wales Department of Human Services, Community Services
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Child and Family Service Alliance members
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Berry Street (Victoria)
- Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Save the Children Australia.

Burton concludes that:

two key means to increase access to and engagement with children and family services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are: (i) working within a cultural competence framework; and (ii) engaging in effective partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations (Burton 2012:5).

Burton goes on to draw from the case studies the principles that underpin successful partnership engagement, namely:

1. Commitment to developing long-term sustainable relationships based on trust.
2. Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, history, lived experience and connection to community and country.
3. Commitment to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
4. Aim to improve long-term well-being outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.
5. Shared responsibility and accountability for shared objectives and activities.
6. Valuing process elements as integral to support and enable partnership.
7. A commitment to redressing structures, relationships and outcomes that are unequal and/or discriminatory.
8. Openness to working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, recognising that the mainstream approaches are frequently not the most appropriate or effective (Burton 2012:6).



These principles are interconnected. As Burton states:

where the eight principles identified are embedded in the structures, processes and practices of partner organisations, supported by upper management and consciously filtered through to staff at other levels of service delivery, they contribute to improved service development and delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families (Burton 2012:9).

Burton emphasises that mainstream service providers have to make extra efforts where trust has been undermined by past mistreatment practices.

In developing partnerships, Burton asserts that:

formalising partnerships through agreements, and incorporating partnership processes and activities into the policies and procedures of partnering organisations... are necessary to: ensure that partnerships are sustainable; clarify commitments and resource allocation; and promote mutual accountability for shared objectives (Burton 2012:6–7).

Further, mainstream partners need to recognise ‘the important leading role of ACCOs (Aboriginal child care organisations) in identifying needs, and designing and delivering responses’ (Burton 2012:7).

Maintaining partnerships requires regular, open and frank communication; informal and flexible planning processes; staffing to facilitate linkages; relationship building; and developing a shared understanding of community needs and continuing learning. A significant investment of time and resources is required and benefits tend to be long term and result from good partnership processes.

Mutual capacity building occurs in partnerships but significant support is needed to build capacity through ‘training and local workforce development, mentoring of staff, governance systems development and support for obtaining sustainable funding’ (Burton 2012:9). Successful and respectful partnerships emphasise ‘transfer of resources, leadership and responsibility for service provision’ to the Aboriginal partners (Burton 2012:9).

Burton (2012) recommends building partnership frameworks based on good practice principles, and cultural competence standards into the criteria for government tenders and contractual provisions of service agreements for services delivered in partnership between Aboriginal child care organisations and mainstream service providers.

Engagement in environment/natural resource management activities

There are several studies of what works in Indigenous engagement in environmental management programs; further lessons from research in this sector are reproduced below. As indicated earlier, some of these lessons may be relevant beyond the environmental sector.

Table 1 : Indigenous engagement in environmental management programs

Topic	Region	Focus	Study author(s)
Indigenous engagement in regional NRM processes	Six regions: North Central Victoria; Hunter Region and Dubbo, New South Wales; Wet and Dry Tropics, Queensland; Tasmania.	Indigenous engagement in new regional NRM arrangements	Smyth et al. 2004

(continued)

Table 1 (continued): Indigenous engagement in environmental management programs

Topic	Region	Focus	Study author(s)
Indigenous engagement in Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) in South East Queensland	South-east Queensland, particularly Woorabinda, Cherbourg, Hervey Bay, Glasshouse Mountains, Githabul lands and Beaudesert	Failure of the RFA processes to meet Indigenous aspirations despite significant consultation	Lloyd et al. 2005
Indigenous Protected Area Program evaluation	National	Review of the national Indigenous Protected Area Program	Gilligan 2006
Democratisation of coastal zone decision making for Indigenous Australians	Two Central Queensland coastal catchments: Lower Fitzroy and Port Curtis	Challenges facing Indigenous people in participatory coastal zone management	Rockloff & Lockie 2006
Marine resource management	Yarrabah, Queensland	Indigenous knowledge and bureaucratic engagement	Babidge et al. 2007
Partnerships in protected area management	Nitmiluk National Park, Northern Territory; Booderee National Park, Jervis Bay Territory, Australian Capital Territory; and Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area, Northern Territory	Joint management arrangements and partnerships	Bauman & Smyth 2007
Consultation in planning for Ma:Mu Rainforest Canopy Walkway	West of Innisfail, North Queensland	Processes of engagement with traditional owners about cultural heritage and native title rights	Meadows 2009
Indigenous engagement in environmental management	Far North Queensland	Two traditional owner groups with land/sea management plans being implemented in partnership with NRM agencies	Nurse-Bray et al. 2009
Community based environmental management	Three locations in rural Queensland	How engagement protocols are put into operation	Carter 2010
Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (South Australia)	Around mouth of the River Murray, Coorong and Encounter Bay, South Australia	Development of an Aboriginal Regional Authority as a partner to governments re Sea Country Plan	Hemming et al. 2011
Indigenous knowledge	Yarrabah, North Queensland	Bureaucratic engagement with Indigenous knowledge	Babidge et al. 2007
Co-management of Giringun 'country' through Indigenous Ranger Unit	North Queensland and Great Barrier Reef	Practicalities of co-management of Giringun 'country' with other partners	Zurba et al. 2012
Traditional Use of Marine Area on Great Barrier Reef	North Queensland and Great Barrier Reef	Management of green sea turtles and dugong	Zurba 2009
Engagement in marine habitat monitoring	Torres Strait Islands (Thursday Island and Horn Island)	Engagement of young Torres Strait Islanders in marine research	Mellors et al. 2008



Where engagement worked

Engagement worked where:

- Serious efforts are made by outsiders to understand the cultural, social and political character of the participating communities (Mellors et al. 2008).
- Officials support Indigenous processes and go to Indigenous meetings, rather than asking Indigenous people to join predetermined NRM agency processes (Gilligan 2006; Rockloff & Lockie 2006; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Agencies demonstrate flexibility and high-level leadership skills, all parties are committed to shared management, and there are sophisticated approaches to intercultural engagement (Bauman & Smyth 2007) (for example, a consensual steering committee with mutually agreed rules of engagement) (Zurba et al. 2012).
- Dedicated resources are available and secure (Bauman & Smyth 2007), meaning funding and specialist staff; there is clarity about resource and financial limitations (Bauman & Smyth 2007) and roles and responsibilities (Zurba et al. 2012).
- There is an effective and representative Indigenous party (Bauman & Smyth 2007); Aboriginal governance and internal protocols are agreed—based on cultural histories and geographies and often through a complex network of organisations and families (Hemming et al. 2011); Aboriginal people develop their own governance to challenge institutionalised power (Rockloff & Lockie 2006).
- There is strong and strategic Indigenous leadership and guidance from Elders; Indigenous leaders are able to mobilise their own people in NRM planning by showing that this is a way they can have a say in decision making, and NRM leaders resource and support such Indigenous leaders to do this (Gilligan 2006; Smyth et al. 2004; Zurba et al. 2012).
- Indigenous people are explicitly recognised as custodians of their country; others respect and try to incorporate Indigenous knowledge (gendered knowledge) and values in relation to country in NRM programs; engagement is based on Aboriginal agency and decision making or negotiation, not simply consultation (Babidge et al. 2007; Gilligan 2006; Nursey-Bray et al. 2009; Rockloff & Lockie 2006; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Planning is at the scale of each Indigenous group's 'traditional country'; this may mean that it is necessary to support the development of new collaborative governance arrangements between and among Indigenous groups associated with an NRM region (Smyth et al. 2004).
- Indigenous diversity is accommodated within an NRM region. Different models and protocols will be needed for multi-layered engagement, with different mechanisms and strategies in different locations (Gilligan 2006; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Engagement processes help to build the capacities of Indigenous, NRM and other agencies (Gilligan 2006; Rockloff & Lockie 2006; Smyth et al. 2004); there is incremental capacity development and joint training (Bauman & Smyth 2007); Indigenous people offer training to build capacity of non-Indigenous stakeholders to improve relationships (Rockloff & Lockie 2006).
- Environmental objectives complement social and economic objectives; social justice must be combined with environmental goals (for example, employment and training is provided for Indigenous people as part of the program) (Mellors et al. 2008; Nursey-Bray et al. 2009; Rockloff & Lockie 2006; Smyth et al. 2004).
- There is effective, ongoing and honest communication on terms that work for Indigenous people (that is, meet where Indigenous people want to meet, be adaptable and responsive, communicate a message in several different ways) (Gilligan 2006; Smyth et al. 2004; Zurba et al. 2012).
- There is a two-way flow of knowledge between scientific and local communities (Mellors et al. 2008; Zurba 2009); training and capacity development for environmental monitoring is provided in a culturally relevant way and feedback from monitoring is provided to the community promptly (Mellors et al. 2008).
- Indigenous land ownership acts as a key foundation (Bauman & Smyth 2007).



Where engagement did not work so well

The following are instances where engagement did not work so well:

- Aboriginal people were treated as 'one group of stakeholders among many' in centrally controlled processes largely controlled by governments and developers, rather than as recognised traditional owners of the country (Rockloff & Lockie 2006).
- Aboriginal people had difficulty proving their connection to 'country' under legislation, and agencies assumed that people removed from their homelands as a result of earlier policies had weaker connections than they actually did; there was a mixture of people with traditional and contemporary connections (Carter 2010).
- Engagement relations were codified within static protocols, and protocols assumed a discrete geographically and socially contained community, and a single entity for decision making; agreed protocols were not adhered to and there was no reciprocity or respect in relation to Aboriginal-devised protocols (Carter 2010; Rockloff & Lockie 2006).
- Governments failed to recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people within a region, consulting only one group (Rockloff & Lockie 2006).
- Agencies did not attend enough to their own entrenched power and disproportionate representation in meetings; Aboriginal people were expected to adapt to western forms of both bureaucratic meetings and constructions of the environment (Carter 2010; Rockloff & Lockie 2006); there was also miscommunication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, which remained despite efforts to address this by both sides (Babidge et al. 2007); everyone involved in a process was being paid except Aboriginal people, who consequently felt an injustice (Rockloff & Lockie 2006).
- Governments did not respond to Aboriginal requests for important information (Carter 2010), or Aboriginal people did not feel their knowledge or views would be respected and listened to (Rockloff & Lockie 2006) (for example, scientific knowledge dominated over local ways of knowing in management of dugong) (Zurba 2009).
- Officers lacked knowledge of the post-contact history of the area, and had only a generic idea of cultural awareness (Carter 2010), or had little knowledge of Aboriginal ways of doing business or how Aboriginal people perceived the environment and their relationship to it (Rockloff & Lockie 2006); cultural tensions existed around dugong hunting, and officers failed to understand the importance of country and sacred sites (Zurba et al. 2012).
- There was inadequate attention to governance, representation and agreement making, which are required for place-based approaches, and regional representation often obscured local complexities that need attention (Carter 2010).
- Government incorrectly assumed that Indigenous people had the governance capacity to engage in and influence decisions about a major environmental infrastructure initiative as equal partners through various well-run Aboriginal corporations, not all of which were signatories to the original Indigenous Land Use Agreement. The speed and scope of the process challenged their governance capacity. Cordial relations broke down about cultural heritage and management of the facility (Meadows 2009).
- Governments expected an individual to represent others but such people often lacked the transport and resources, or cultural authority, to do so; there was also confusion over the role(s) such person(s) should play—be it advocate, representative, delegate, expert or broker/negotiator (Carter 2010). Aboriginal people need support and resourcing to participate without creating dependency (Rockloff & Lockie 2006).

Engagement in health programs

There are also several studies of engagement in health programs; further research findings about what does and doesn't work in this sector specifically are indicated below. Again, the lessons may not be restricted to this sector but have been identified through these studies.

Table 2: Indigenous engagement in health programs

Topic	Region	Focus	Study author(s)
Partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream health services	National	Meta-analysis from 34 sources of partnerships	Taylor & Thompson 2011
Developing a model for community-governed health service delivery	Cape York	Literature review for applying a model in Cape York	Coombe et al. 2008
Partnerships for Aboriginal health	New South Wales	Assessing what works for successful partnerships in health	Bailey & Hunt 2012
NSW Aboriginal Health Promotion Program lessons learned	New South Wales	Findings of two reviews of the program in 2007, 2010	Raymond et al. 2012
Community participation in an Aboriginal health service	Nunyarra, South Australia	Community participation in an Aboriginal health service	Champion et al. 2008
Legal constraints on Aboriginal governance of health	Australian, Canadian and United States (Native American) contexts	Legal and policy conditions to enable good governance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health—ideas from overseas	Howse 2011
Health service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships for mental health services	Tweed Valley Health Service region, Tweed Heads, New South Wales	Partnership between mainstream providers and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop services	Salisbury 1998
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and development of influenza containment strategies	New South Wales, Queensland, Torres Strait and Western Australia	Action–research partnership to develop influenza containment strategies	Massey et al. 2011
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) ear trial	Eight Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across Queensland and Western Australia participated in the trial under NACCHO management	Aboriginal community controlled health research to manage otitis media	Couzos et al. 2005
Aboriginal health worker training	Victoria	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) working with Aboriginal communities to develop and implement a health worker training program	Adams & Spratling 2001

Table 2 (continued): Indigenous engagement in health programs

Topic	Region	Focus	Study author(s)
Community development through partnership: health in an urban Indigenous community, New Zealand	South Auckland, New Zealand	Evaluation of a partnership for health promotion between a health group and an urban Māori community	Voyle & Simmons 1999
Addressing racism in a regional health service	Hunter New England, New South Wales	Describes a range of approaches to addressing racism in a health service (being evaluated in 2012)	Hunter New England Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Leadership Committee 2012

Where engagement worked

The following are instances where engagement did work:

- Collective community-governed control of health services promotes engagement, though finding the right model is both important and difficult (Coombe et al. 2008); aligning with community needs and giving a service an Aboriginal name is valuable (Taylor & Thompson 2011).
- Building trust through tangible benefits and implementing an empowering process through community development in which power is devolved (Voyle & Simmons 1999).
- Partnerships that allowed for training of Aboriginal staff; this training contributed to both community trust and tangible economic benefits (Taylor & Thompson 2011).
- Intellectual property vested in community-controlled bodies and using researchers with good cross-cultural skills (Couzos et al. 2005).
- Participatory processes with Aboriginal research assistants, focus groups, consultation and feedback processes with Aboriginal communities and health services (Massey et al. 2011).
- Extensive community consultation using existing community organisations/structures, Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal health workers, including through a course advisory board; drawing on Aboriginal ideas, developing them and consulting again until a program meets Aboriginal needs (Adams & Spratling 2001).
- Clarity and coherence about responsibility for all aspects of health services, and aggregated, flexible funding (with clear partnership arrangements) through contracts, treaties and other mechanisms; having an active role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognising customary laws and traditional healers (Howse 2011).
- An acceptance that different parties will have different roles and responsibilities, with an appropriate provision of adequate resources based on the roles/responsibilities of each partner (Bailey & Hunt 2012).
- Realistic and specific objectives, usually those that each partner organisation would not be able to meet by working alone (Bailey & Hunt 2012).
- Review and evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative, that assess the partnership process as well as the outcomes (which helps the partnership to adapt and to operate effectively) (Bailey & Hunt 2012).



Where engagement did not work so well

The following are instances where engagement did not work so well:

- Poor government governance—lack of agency coordination, duplication, failure to adapt to change, unstable policy environment and ineffective processes (Howse 2011).
- Assumption of mainstream health workers that there was only one Aboriginal ‘community’ (when in this case there were 10 different language groups) prevented more inclusive approaches to overcoming language and social differences (Champion et al. 2008).
- Racism embedded in organisations as well as in individual attitudes and practices (Hunter New England Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Leadership Committee 2012).
- Failure to tangibly resource the Indigenous partner (Voyle & Simmons 1999).
- Funding allocations too small and often used to support one-off programs with limited sustained health improvements; funding relationship that creates power imbalances (Raymond et al. 2012).
- Time frames too short; partnerships lacking adequate resources; differences in pay, position and training between mainstream and Aboriginal health workers; internal politics of Aboriginal organisations and the lack of cultural sensitivity of some mainstream providers (Taylor & Thompson 2011).

NGO partnerships with Indigenous organisations

Hunt conducted three studies of the ways in which non-government organisations that work in international development engage with Australian Aboriginal partner organisations in undertaking development projects in Aboriginal Australia in healing, financial literacy, (Hunt 2010) and early childhood (Hunt 2012).

The key things that worked in these partnerships were:

- long time frames for the partnerships, which enabled approaches to be developed that worked and that built Indigenous staff capacity for program management
- willingness to share risks and to foster innovation and flexibility (including flexibility in relation to the Aboriginal organisation’s use of the funding provided)
- strong, respectful and honest personal relationships between staff of the relevant organisations
- strong Indigenous leadership
- shared vision, basic principles and foundations, especially respect for the Indigenous clients of the programs
- partnerships based on respect for Indigenous control and decision making and on priorities set by Indigenous people; responsiveness to Indigenous needs and local decision making within a policy framework of human rights and respect for self determination
- building on culture, history, Indigenous aspirations and understandings, and the detailed knowledge of the Indigenous community within the Indigenous organisation
- using a strengths-based development approach, which built on and helped to develop the capacities of Indigenous people and organisations
- capacity development support and training that was targeted to (and specific to) the needs of the organisation and its key staff, and that provided relevant, recognised qualifications in local settings
- linkages developed with other service providers.



The challenges the partnerships faced included:

- difficulties in cross-cultural communication
- maintaining a relationship through an NGO's growth and considerable staff turnover
- managing an NGO's 'exit strategy', and frankness about funding
- agreeing and delivering on reporting and evaluation requirements
- forging successful partnerships with other organisations, particularly in a developmental framework.

Conclusion

Some common lessons learnt about what works are evident across all three sectors and are consistent with the findings of studies of regional engagement in the Clearinghouse issues paper *Engaging with Indigenous Australia—exploring the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*.

Engagement works where:

- All parties are committed to developing long-term sustainable relationships based on trust (Burton 2012; Salisbury 1998); Indigenous people are able to set their own time frames compatible with their own cultural protocols—short-term outcomes may not be met within the desired time frames of governments, but longer term outcomes will be better (Gilligan 2006; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Partnerships with Aboriginal people operate within a framework of Aboriginal self determination (Bailey & Hunt 2012; Burton 2012; Raymond et al. 2012) or Aboriginal decision making, with Indigenous-driven priorities (Bauman & Smyth 2007; Rockloff & Lockie 2006). For example, where the process was Aboriginal-controlled from setting the research agenda through all stages (Couzos et al. 2005); the process was Aboriginal driven and built the capacity of everyone (Salisbury 1998). The process must be deliberate and adaptive, facilitated by people committed to Indigenous empowerment, priority setting and decision making; governments need to be responsive to Indigenous priorities (Gilligan 2006; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Power inequalities are addressed (Voyle & Simmons 1999); where power inequality is recognised at the outset and genuine efforts are made to share power, including agreed conflict resolution processes and transparency about decision making; where agreements spell out mutual benefits for each party (Carter 2010); where formal recognition of Aboriginal parties demonstrates the respect other parties bring to the engagement; and where contracts or agreements provide a sense of greater power in otherwise unequal engagements (Hemming et al. 2011; Lloyd et al. 2005). Unequal power in relationships can be reduced by strong mutual accountability relationships in agreements (Burton 2012).
- Staff appreciate the historical context (Voyle & Simmons 1999) and have cultural knowledge. Staff need to understand the social and historical context in each place and recognise contemporary fluidity (Nurse-Bray et al. 2009). Cultural competency in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes is critical and must include recognising and valuing the cultural knowledge and skills of community organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Burton 2012).
- There is a willingness to share responsibility and accountability for shared objectives; for example, joint planning, monitoring and evaluation in line with the rights and needs of parties (Bauman & Smyth 2007); and collaborative formulation of criteria and indicators for annual self-assessments (Zurba et al. 2012).

Appendix A

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse Assessed collection includes summaries of research and evaluations that provide information on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage across the seven Council of Australian Governments building block topics.

Table A1 lists selected research and evaluations that were the key pieces of evidence used in this resource sheet. The major components are summarised in the Assessed collection.

To view the Assessed collection, visit <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/collections/>>.

Table A1: Assessed collection items for *Engagement with Indigenous communities in key sectors*

Title	Year	Author(s)
Case studies in Indigenous engagement in natural resource management in Australia	2004	Smyth D, Szabo S & George M
Indigenous partnerships in protected area management in Australia: three case studies	2007	Bauman T & Smyth D
Having a yarn: the importance of appropriate engagement and participation in the development of Indigenous driven environmental policy	2009	Nurse-Bray M, Wallis A & Rist P
Protocols, particularities, and problematising Indigenous 'engagement' in community-based environmental management in settled Australia	2010	Carter J
Partnerships for Indigenous development: international development NGOs, Aboriginal organisations and communities	2010	Hunt J
Closing the (service) gap: exploring partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream health services	2011	Taylor KP & Thompson SC
Successful partnerships are the key to improving Aboriginal health	2012	Bailey S & Hunt J
Opening doors through partnerships: practical approaches to developing genuine partnerships that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs	2012	Burton J

Table A2 contains a list of Closing the Gap Clearinghouse issues papers and resource sheets related to this resource sheet.

To view the publications, visit <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/publications/>>.

Table A2: Related Clearinghouse resource sheets and issues papers

Title	Year	Author(s)
Community development approaches to safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children	2010	Higgins DJ
Improving Indigenous community governance through strengthening Indigenous and government organisational capacity	2012	Tsey K, McCalman J, Bainbridge R & Brown C
Engaging with Indigenous Australia—exploring the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	2013	Hunt J



References

- Adams K & Spratling M 2001. Keepin Ya Mob Healthy: Aboriginal community participation and Aboriginal Health Worker training in Victoria. *Australian Journal of Primary Health* 7(1):116–19.
- Babidge S, Greer S, Henry R & Pam C 2007. Management speak: Indigenous knowledge and bureaucratic engagement. *Social Analysis* 51(3):148–64.
- Bailey S & Hunt J 2012. Successful partnerships are the key to improving Aboriginal health. *NSW Public Health Bulletin* 23(3–4):48–51.
- Bauman T & Smyth D 2007. Indigenous partnerships in protected area management in Australia: three case studies. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies & Melbourne: The Australian Collaboration. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/casestudiesofjointmanagement.html>>.
- Burton J 2012. Opening doors through partnerships: practical approaches to developing genuine partnerships that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs. Melbourne: Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://www.snaicc.org.au/tools-resources/fx-list-resources.cfm?loadref=5&initsearch=1&searchbyterm=opening+doors&txnid=1246&txnctype=resource&txncstype=document>>.
- Carter J 2010. Protocols, particularities, and problematising Indigenous ‘engagement’ in community-based environmental management in settled Australia. *The Geographical Journal* 176(3):199–213.
- Champion S, Franks C & Taylor J 2008. Increasing community participation in an Aboriginal health service. *Australian Journal of Rural Health* 16(5):297–301.
- Coombe LL, Haswell-Elkins MR & Hill PS 2008. Community-governed health services in Cape York: does the evidence point to a model of service delivery? *Australian Health Review* 32(4):605–12.
- Couzos S, Lea T, Murray R & Culbong M 2005. ‘We are not just participants—we are in charge’: the NACCHO ear trial and the process for Aboriginal community-controlled health research. *Ethnicity and Health* 10(2):91–111.
- Gilligan B 2006. The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme—2006 evaluation. Canberra: Department of the Environment and Heritage. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/ipa-evaluation.html>>.
- Hemming S, Rigney D & Berg S 2011. Ngarrindjeri futures: negotiation, governance and environmental management. In: Maddison S & Brigg M (eds). *Unsettling the settler state: creativity and resistance in Indigenous settler-state governance*. Sydney: Federation Press 98–115.
- Howse G 2011. Legally invisible—how Australian laws impede stewardship and governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Discussion paper. Melbourne: Lowitja Institute. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://www.lowitja.org.au/lowitja-publishing/L001>>.
- Hunt J 2010. Partnerships for Indigenous development: international development NGOs, Aboriginal organisations and communities. CAEPR working paper no. 71/2010. Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://caepr.anu.edu.au/Publications/WP/2010WP71.php>>.
- Hunt J 2012. Community development for sustainable early childhood care and development programs: a World Vision Australia and Central Land Council partnership. CAEPR working paper no. 86/2012. Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://caepr.anu.edu.au/Publications/WP/2012WP86.php>>.
- Hunter New England Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Leadership Committee 2012. Closing the gap in a regional health service in NSW: a multistrategic approach to addressing individual and institutional racism. *NSW Public Health Bulletin* 23(3–4):63–7.



- Lloyd DJ, Van Nimwegen P & Boyd WE 2005. Letting Indigenous people talk about their country: a case study of cross-cultural (mis)communication in an environmental management planning process. *Geographical Research* 43(4):406–16.
- Massey PD, Miller A, Saggars S, Durrheim DN, Speare R, Taylor K et al. 2011. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the development of pandemic influenza containment strategies: community voices and community control. *Health Policy* 103(2–3):184–90.
- Meadows G 2009. The consultative process in planning for the Ma:Mu Canopy Walk in the Wooroonooran National Park—Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* 16(4):253–60.
- Mellors JE, McKenzie LJ & Coles RG 2008. Seagrass-Watch: engaging Torres Strait Islanders in marine habitat monitoring. *Continental Shelf Research* 28(16):2339–49.
- Nurse-Bray M, Wallis A & Rist P 2009. Having a yarn: the importance of appropriate engagement and participation in the development of Indigenous driven environmental policy, Queensland, Australia. *Indigenous Policy Journal* 20(3):1–40.
- Raymond I, McDonnell C & Wilson G 2012. NSW Aboriginal Health Promotion Program: lessons learned and ways forward. *NSW Public Health Bulletin* 23(4):57–8.
- Rockloff SF & Lockie S 2006. Democratisation of coastal zone decision-making for Indigenous Australians: insights from stakeholder analysis. *Coastal Management* 34(3):251–66.
- Salisbury C 1998. A health service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnership to develop and plan mental health services. *Australian Journal of Primary Health* 4(4):18–30.
- Smyth D, Szabo S & George M 2004. Case studies in Indigenous engagement in natural resource management in Australia. Canberra: Department of the Environment and Heritage. Viewed 28 December 2012, <<http://nrmonline.nrm.gov.au/catalog/mql:2335>>.
- Taylor KP & Thompson SC 2011. Closing the (service) gap: exploring partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream health services. *Australian Health Review* 35(3):297–308.
- Voyle JA & Simmons D 1999. Community development through partnership: promoting health in an urban Indigenous community in New Zealand. *Social Science and Medicine* 49(8):1035–50.
- Zurba M 2009. Bringing local synthesis into governance and management systems: the Girringun TUMRA case in Northern Queensland, Australia. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 39(4):179–82.
- Zurba M, Ross H, Izurieta A, Rist P, Bock E & Berkes F 2012. Building co-management as a process: problem solving through partnership in Aboriginal country, Australia. *Environmental Management* 49(6):1130–42.



Acknowledgments

This resource sheet was prepared by Dr Janet Hunt, Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University. After a long career in international development, followed by senior lecturing positions in international development at Deakin and RMIT Universities, she moved into Indigenous Australian development. Janet relocated to CAEPR to manage the Indigenous Community Governance Project 2004-2008, a major national study of governance in Indigenous communities. Since then she has continued her research interests in Indigenous governance and engagement, and community development, while researching Indigenous engagement in natural resource management in New South Wales. She also teaches a postgraduate course in Australian Indigenous Development.

The author is extremely grateful to CAEPR Aurora Intern Megan Elkington for her assistance in literature searching and summarising material. The author is also very grateful for the assistance of staff of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in finalising this paper.

Abbreviations

ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NGO	Non-government organisation
NRM	Natural resource management
RFA	Regional Forest Agreement
UN	United Nations
VACCHO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Terminology

Indigenous: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous' are used interchangeably to refer to Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse uses the term 'Indigenous Australians' to refer to Australia's first people.

Funding

This paper was commissioned by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is a Council of Australian Governments' initiative jointly funded by all Australian Governments. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies deliver the Clearinghouse.

Suggested citation

Hunt J 2013. Engagement with Indigenous communities in key sectors. Resource sheet no. 23. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.



Copyright

© Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2013 

This product, excluding the AIHW logo, Commonwealth Coat of Arms and any material owned by a third party or protected by a trademark, has been released under a Creative Commons BY 3.0 (CC BY 3.0) licence. Excluded material owned by third parties may include, for example, design and layout, images obtained under licence from third parties and signatures. We have made all reasonable efforts to identify and label material owned by third parties.

You may distribute, remix and build upon this work. However, you must attribute the AIHW as the copyright holder of the work in compliance with our attribution policy available at www.aihw.gov.au/copyright/. The full terms and conditions of this licence are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/>.

Enquiries relating to copyright should be addressed to the Head of the Media and Strategic Engagement Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601.

ISBN 978-1-74249-497-5

ISSN 2201-845X

Cat. no. IHW 105